

# Lithuanian Nationalists Call for Independence

## Independent Lithuanian State Urged

LITHUANIA, From A1

Lithuania was absorbed into the Soviet Union in 1940 as a result of a secret pact between Nazi Germany and Joseph Stalin's regime.

The Independence Day celebrations, marking Lithuania's emergence as an independent nation after World War I, were officially endorsed by the local Communist Party, which is attempting to regain popular support. Both the party and Sajudis are putting forward candidates to contest nationwide elections for a revamped Soviet legislature on March 26.

The latest challenge from Lithuania poses new political problems for Gorbachev, who has sought to keep the lid on a resurgence of nationalist feelings in the Baltic republics over the past year. In a meeting with workers' representatives in Moscow earlier this week, the Kremlin chief said that only "extremists" or "people obsessed with personal ambition" would go so far as to demand Lithuania's secession from the Soviet Union.

Although the Sajudis manifesto did not call for the republic's immediate secession from the Soviet Union, it made clear that this was its long-term goal. It also suggested that an independent Lithuania would not remain part of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact.

"Sajudis will follow the road to legal, political, economic and cultural independence for Lithuania, to state sovereignty, without confining itself to partial achievements," the manifesto said, citing Gorbachev's speech to the United Nations in December in which he called for all nations to be allowed to exercise "freedom of choice."

In a telephone interview from the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius tonight, Sajudis President Vytautas Landsbergis acknowledged that the manifesto marked a major "step forward" for the movement that only held its inaugural congress last October. He said that Sajudis would



Crowd gathers in Vilnius in first officially approved celebration in 50 years of prewar Lithuania's independence day.

work toward the goals of independence and neutrality through "peaceful, legal and constitutional methods."

The manifesto goes significantly further than a controversial resolution adopted by the parliament of the nearby Baltic republic of Estonia in November that declared the republic's "sovereignty" within the framework of the Soviet Union. That resolution provoked a political showdown between Estonia and central authorities in Moscow, with Gorbachev ruling that it was "invalid" and "unconstitutional."

In private, many activists of the newly formed popular front movements that have emerged in all three Baltic republics over the past year readily concede that independence is their long-term goal. But until now, they have refrained from including this aim in official documents and resolutions.

Landsbergis said he expected Sajudis to win three-quarters of the 42 seats allocated to Lithuania in the new Congress of People's Deputies, a prediction echoed by many other political analysts. This would leave the movement in a very strong position to win a majority of seats in the Lithuanian legislature when

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MOSCOW, Feb. 16—The largest grass-roots organization in Lithuania has broken one of the last remaining political taboos in Mikhail Gorbachev's Soviet Union by pledging to work toward the "independence" and "neutrality" of the Baltic republic.

The demand for "state sovereignty" was overwhelmingly approved at a meeting last night of leaders of the 200-member council of Sajudis, a mass movement that has emerged as a powerful political force in Lithuania over the past few months. Sajudis officials said the decision was passed with only eight opposing votes and eight abstentions.

The political goals cited in the manifesto included the restoration of Lithuania's "traditional status of neutrality in a European demilitarized zone, as well as [striving for]

universally accepted human and civil freedoms, from which flows the general right of Lithuania's citizens independently to choose and develop their own forms of state existence."

Independent mass movements and fledgling political parties in other East European countries have generally refrained from endorsing neutrality because of fears that it might exceed the bounds of Kremlin tolerance. A declaration of neutrality by the Hungarian government in 1956 was followed days later by a Soviet invasion and brutal suppression of a popular uprising.

Reflecting the dramatic change in political climate among Baltic republics over the past year, hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians today celebrated their prewar nation's independence day legally for the first time in nearly 50 years.

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new elections in the republics are held in the fall.

"We will be a small minority in Moscow, but we will be in a strong moral position if most Lithuanians vote for us," said Landsbergis, who is also a professor of music.

Asked whether the resolution meant that an independent Lithuania would leave the Warsaw Pact, Landsbergis said Lithuanians had never been permitted to express freely their opinion about joining a military alliance. He described the call for a neutral Lithuania as "simply a continuation" of prewar tradition when the country was a buffer between Germany and the Soviet Union.

With its relatively homogeneous population, Lithuania has a more solid base of support for an independent, nationally inspired mass movement than either Estonia or Latvia. Native Lithuanians account for about 80 percent of Lithuania's population of 3.5 million, in contrast to Latvia, where Russian and other Slav immigrants are almost as numerous as native Latvians.

During the Independence Day celebrations, about 200,000 people gathered in the prewar capital of Kaunas to mark the reopening of



BY LARRY FOGEL—THE WASHINGTON POST

the Liberty Monument in the city center. The last foreign minister of independent Lithuania, Guozas Urbys, now 92, told the crowd that he hoped that the republic would one day enjoy real independence again.